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1983

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3-1-1983

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Recommended Citation

University Marketing and Communications, "03/01/1983 - Basketball Game Is Crucial" (1983). 1983. 441.
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/press_releases_1983/441

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Panther Sports News

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March 1, 1983

LS-AS-BB-BB OPP

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Eastern Illinois University's season closing basketball game with Southwest Missouri Saturday (March 5) is a crucial one for both teams. The two teams will tipoff at 7:30 p.m. in EIU's Lantz Gym.

A Panther victory can guarantee a finish at least in the top three of the Mid-Continent while Southwest Missouri can win the league outright with a win.

The Panthers were 7-3 in conference play and 12-17 overall prior to Wednesday's AMCU game at Illinois-Chicago. If they are victorious at UIC they can get a first place tie with Western Illinois as both would be finished at 9-3.

Southwest enters the game with a 6-1 league record. The Bears conclude the season at Northern Iowa Monday (March 7) so two losses would drop them to third but a win in either game would give them the championship.

"It appears right now that a lot hinges on this final game of the season . . . for both of us . . . and that's the way it ought to be," said Coach Rick Samuels.

"It shows that we have a lot of balance in this league when going into the final week three or four teams are in the running for the league championship.

"Besides wanting to gain some standing in the conference, we also want to redeem ourselves for not playing well at Southwest a week or so ago. Southwest was ready to play and we weren't . . . we simply weren't aggressive or intent and were too far down when we got after it late."

A few individual and team goals should also spur the Panthers on Saturday. EIU is currently hitting 50.1% from the field and within striking distance of the school record 50.5%.

Kevin Jones (Indianapolis, IN-Marshall/Kankakee CC) could become only the 13th Panther to score 500 points in a single season but would need a couple 20 point plus games to do it.

Dirk Androff (Decatur-Eisenhower) is leading the league with a 57.8% field goal percentage and will need to maintain that to stay atop the conference standings. He can become

the best field goal shooter since EIU became exclusively a NCAA team ten years ago, and the best since Jim Ficek set the season mark of 63.1% (1964-65) nearly twenty years ago.

Tim Dykstra (Plymouth, IN-Laville) is averaging an even ten points a game so could average in double figures for the first time in his three year career.

Kevin Duckworth (Dolton-Thornridge), 6-11 freshman center, is just a few points shy of averaging in double figures. He has hit double figures in six of his last seven games averaging 12 points in that stretch.

GAME NOTES

THE GAME: Eastern Illinois University hosts Southwest Missouri State, 7:30, Saturday, March 5, Lantz Gym.

THE SERIES: Southwest leads the series, 7-3, winning the last three games including one at Springfield, MO two weeks ago 82-75. Kevin Jones had 19 points and Tim Dykstra had 18 but SWMS's Bobby Howard scored 27 points and Ricky Johnson had 19.

SOUTHWEST MISSOURI: The Bears are 13-13 heading into the two final games of the season, and bidding to have a .500 year in their first year of Division I play. Four of the starters have played the majority of the contests and all average in double figures, Howard at 15.1, Joe Ward at 14.0, Anthony Boggs at 12.2 and Ricky Johnson at 10.4. Boggs is a junior while the rest are seniors. Howard has the hottest hand of late averaging over 20 points in his last seven contests, hitting almost 57% from the field. He was 11 for 17 in the first game with EIU. The fifth starter is Brian Smith who has handed out almost 50 assists in his last seven games including a SWMS season high 12 against Eastern Illinois. Southwest has been successful on the road winning all three conference games at Western Illinois, Wisconsin-Green Bay and Valparaiso.

SEASON RECORD: Although the Panthers will be below .500 for the first time in ten years (10-16 in 1972-73), they still pulled off a remarkable comeback after starting 0-12. EIU has won 12 of its last 17 games to jump back into the conference championship race.

CONFERENCE STANDINGS:

	<u>AMCU</u>	<u>OVERALL</u>
Southwest Missouri	6-1	13-13
Western Illinois	9-3	20-10
EASTERN ILLINOIS	7-3	12-17
Illinois-Chicago	6-4	15-11
Northern Iowa	5-5	12-17
Valparaiso	4-9	13-15
Wis-Green Bay	2-11	8-19
Cleveland State	1-4	8-20

TENTATIVE STARTERS:

<u>EIU</u>				<u>SOUTHWEST MISSOURI</u>			
22	F	Tim Dykstra	6-5 Jr.	40	F	Bobby Howard	6-5 Sr.
52	F	Dirk Androff	6-7 Jr.	42	F	Eric Gray	6-5 Jr.
00	C	Kevin Duckworth	6-11 Fr.	32	C	Ricky Johnson	6-9 Sr.
44	G	Kevin Jones	6-3 Sr.	14	G	Anthony Boggs	6-3 Jr.
10	G	Doug Crook	6-1 Fr.	20	G	Joe Ward	6-4 Sr.